

Caring for the Caregiver

When caring for a loved one suffering from a long-term illness, it is easy to become so wrapped up in the day-to-day care of that person that you forget to care for yourself.

This type of single-minded focus can cause a condition commonly referred to as compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. It often affects a person's ability to care effectively for others and for themselves.

Experiencing compassion fatigue does not make you a bad person or a bad caregiver. It simply means that you need to find a balance between taking care of your loved one and practicing regular self-care.

Warning signs of compassion fatigue include:

- Depression
- Increased irritability
- Physical or emotional exhaustion
- Increased trouble sleeping
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach upset, or hypertension
- Anger
- Abuse of food, alcohol, or drugs

Ways you can help prevent or recover from compassion fatigue include:

- Find someone you can talk to about what you are feeling.
- Understand that what you are experiencing is normal and not a sign of weakness.
- Exercise and eat properly.



- Limit the amount of caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine you consume.
- Get adequate rest.
- Limit the amount of news, newspapers, or negative television programs you access.
- Share the load with siblings, relatives, or family friends so you can have some time away. If there is no one to help, explore community resources.
- Give yourself time.

The road to recovery from compassion fatigue can be long and slow. Proper self-care and awareness will make the process easier.

LifeMatters® is available to provide assistance with a variety of lifestyle issues. Call anytime.

1-800-657-3719

Toll-Free U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico

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